Rural and urban telephone subcribers

†2587. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a huge gap in the number of telephone subscribers of rural and urban areas of the country;

(b) if so, the respective number of telephone subscribers in urban and rural areas of the country, till March, 2003; and

(c) what additional steps Government have taken, so far, to increase the number of telephone subscribers in rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) Yes, Sir. There is a huge gap in the number of telephone subscribers of rural and urban areas of the country.

(b) The number of telphone subscribers in Urban and Rural areas of the country, till March, 2003 is as given below:

Rural	114.06 lakh lines
Urban	432.10 lakh lines

(c) A number of policy measures have been taken during past few years to expand telecom services in the rural areas. The new telecom policy-1999 stipulates several specific objectives and time bound targets for teledensity and rural telephony. Further to increase the number of subscribers in rural areas, the following steps are taken:

1. Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) system is inducted into rural network.
2. It is planned to create more capacity in exchanges.

Video conferencing facility

†2588. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are considering any proposal to connect the famous Badrinath and Kedarnath Temples by video conferencing facility at the earliest;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when, the said facility would be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) At present there is no proposal to connect Badrinath and Kedarnath temples with Video Conferencing facility, and no proposal has so far been received in this connection from any quarter.

Poor postal services

2589. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:
SHRI R.K. ANAND:
SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that many post offices are located in main districts in parts of rural India and that the postal services are poor in far flung villages in certain districts;

(b) if so, the States in which post offices ae situated only in districts;

(c) whether Government have plans to provide post offices in all Gram Panchayats of the States;

(d) if so, by when; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Postal facilities in terms of daily delivery of dak, collection of letters and sale of stamps is available to all citizens both in urban and rural areas, irrespective of terrain. However, counter facilities are extended through 1,55,295 post offices of which 89% are located in rural areas. Of these 1,26,506 are part time Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices which function in areas which do not